

Sacramento is a prime example of how concentrated media ownership can destroy the diversity of ideas in one market:. There are 16 major radio stations licensed in Sacramento; once controlled by a variety of owners, today, they are owned by just three. The effect of concentrated ownership here has been chilling: case in point is the former upstart station KSTE, which, in the mid-90's, with a liberal talk format, gained swift ratings ground on KFBK 1530, the radio home of Rush Limbaugh. Chancellor Broadcasting, KFBK's owner, subsequently purchased rival KSTE, and simultaneously took away both the station's liberal voice and its ratings.

Now there is no wide diversity of news and information we can access on Sacramento airwaves. Rush Limbaugh, Michael Medved, Michael Savage, Tom Sullivan and others all have conservative points of view; there are no liberals. (The owner of one station told me, "We do have Rush on the right, yes, but we have Dr. Laura on the left." Enough said.)

This lack of diversity has caused outrage in the community. At a recent forum sponsored by the Capital Unity Council, citizen after citizen criticized KFBK's "all right, all the time" policy, but were told by a Clear Channel (the current corporate owner of KFBK) vice president that there is no commercial demand for liberal ideas, so they couldn't put them on the air. Perhaps he should review the history of his station KSTE's Arbitron ratings to learn there is enormous demand for alternative points of view.

Democracy demands the debate of ideas. All the people own the airwaves; all the people's ideas need the opportunity to be heard. Eliminating a large set of ideas, whether for commercial or political gain, endangers our democracy like nothing else can.